



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

## PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

February 10, 2010

The Public Safety Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on February 10, 2010 at 4:00 p.m.

### COMMITTEE PRESENT

Dennis Kavanaugh, Chairman  
Dina Higgins  
Scott Somers

### COMMITTEE ABSENT

None

### STAFF PRESENT

Christopher Brady  
Alfred Smith  
Trisha Sorensen

City Manager Christopher Brady joined the meeting at 4:54 p.m. during the Committee's discussion of agenda item 4.

### 1. Items from citizens present.

Chairman Kavanaugh announced that speaker cards were submitted by three individuals, two of whom, Ty Perkins and John Locklin, have requested that their time be allotted to Bryan Jeffries.

Bryan Jeffries, representing the United Mesa Fire Fighters, addressed the Committee regarding dispatch operations. He noted that 16 months ago the Fire Fighters' organization chose to partner with management to collaborate on options in support of the City's effort to address the budget shortfall. Mr. Jeffries said his organization's focus on efficiency, innovation and sustainability resulted in a proposal to utilize the Transitional Response Vehicle (TRV) Program. He stated that the viability of the TRV Program depends on implementing changes and upgrades to the Dispatch Center

Mr. Jeffries stated the opinion that Mesa's system of a combined Police and Fire dispatch operation is antiquated, and he noted that the City of Phoenix, which recognized the problems of a combined operation several years ago, now utilizes separate centers for Fire and Police. He said that Mesa Fire Department personnel are unable to implement the necessary changes because the Police Department controls the Dispatch Center. Mr. Jeffries noted that the Police Department recently met with Boeing personnel regarding the possibility of adding another Fire representative to the Dispatch Center, but a Mesa Fire Department representative was not included in the meeting. He suggested that an alternative to separating the Police and Fire dispatch areas would be to utilize the City of Phoenix Fire dispatch system. Mr. Jeffries concluded his remarks by stating that little has been accomplished regarding the TRV Program

in the past 16 months. He thanked the Committee and added that he would be available to answer any questions.

2. Hear a presentation and discuss electronic patient care records services.

Fire Chief Harry Beck thanked the Committee for the opportunity to discuss these important issues. He reported that although the City was a leader in the development of electronic patient care records several years ago, Mesa now lags behind other cities. Chief Beck said that the department experienced problems with the software that was designed to support this activity. He introduced Assistant Fire Chief Mary Cameli to provide information on this project.

Chief Cameli displayed a PowerPoint presentation (**see Attachment 1**) to update the Committee. She advised that each year the Fire Department generates more than 38,000 handwritten patient care reports (PCRs) which are then manually input into the Records Management System. Chief Cameli said that the City's process for electronic patient care reports (ePCRs) began in 2005 with a Request for Proposals (RFP) and that 62 "tough books" were purchased in 2008 utilizing grant funding. She noted that a second RFP was required in March of 2009 when the selected vendor was sold to another firm.

Chief Cameli outlined the key benefits of the proposed ePCR system (see pages 5, 6 and 7 of Attachment 1). She displayed a list of agencies that presently utilize the system (see page 8 of Attachment 1), and she advised that thousands of agencies utilize ePCR throughout the United States. Chief Cameli stated that a vendor for the system has been identified and staff would like to move forward with the project.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the City of Phoenix does not utilize the ePCR system; and that the State of Arizona has been identified by Homeland Security for the study of a statewide ePCR system.

In response to questions from Chairman Kavanaugh, Chief Cameli explained that the system is a web-based service that enables hospitals and emergency rooms to receive data prior to the arrival of the patient. She stated that staff is working with the hospitals to put the necessary systems in place. Chief Cameli advised that a hospital that was unable to handle a certain patient could respond via the web-based service and direct the transport to a different hospital.

Responding to questions from Committeemember Somers, Chief Cameli said that the State is encouraging municipalities to collect electronic data, and she added that the City's Information Technology Department has been instrumental in the process.

Chief Cameli responded to a question from Committeemember Higgins by advising that Southwest Ambulance would utilize a system that is able to interface with the City's system.

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that data for an individual who was previously treated and entered into the City's system would be available, which reduces the time required to input information; that protected data maintained by the hospital would not be available to the City's system at the present time; and that a future Council agenda item would address the purchase of services from the selected vendor.

Chairman Kavanaugh stated the opinion that the ePCR system was an exciting evolution in the ability to care for patients.

Additional discussion ensued relative to the fact that the system will save many lives; and that as more hospitals utilize automated record systems, emergency personnel may be able to access a patient's medical history.

Chairman Kavanaugh noted that the consensus of the Committee is that this item should move forward for Council consideration.

Chief Beck clarified that the Council previously approved the purchase of the devices and this is the end product of the process. He said that because the project has been ongoing for several years, staff wanted to take this opportunity to update the Committee.

Chairman Kavanaugh concurred that the update was valuable, and he noted that a majority of the current Councilmembers were not serving on the Council when the project was initiated.

3. Hear a presentation and discuss the status of fire station construction.

Fire Chief Harry Beck said that staff has been very busy addressing fire station construction following the successful Bond Election and the \$4 million award in grant funding for this effort. Chief Beck introduced Assistant Chief Jim Bloomer and Fire Fighter Tony Lo Giudice to provide an update on the status of fire station construction.

Chief Bloomer continued the PowerPoint presentation (see pages 10 through 14 of Attachment 1), and he reported that Fire Station 218 was scheduled to be completed in one week. He said that Station 218 is expected to be operational by February 26<sup>th</sup>, with the formal grand opening scheduled for March 10<sup>th</sup>. Chief Bloomer advised that Fire Station 215 at the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport is currently under construction and may be completed ahead of schedule.

Chief Bloomer reported that the City received Federal grants in the amount of \$2 million each for the construction of Fire Stations 219 and 220. He advised that these projects are presently on hold until the environmental survey process required by the Federal government is completed.

Responding to a question from Chairman Kavanaugh, Chief Bloomer stated that a problem with the environmental survey process is that the Federal government is holding Station 219 to a 500 year flood standard. He said that Engineering is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to secure a waiver for that requirement. Chief Bloomer advised that in the event the waiver is denied, staff is working with the architect to determine the costs to meet Federal requirements and to determine if accepting the grant is in the best interest of the City.

Committeemember Somers expressed the opinion that although the area has a drainage issue, it is not located in a flood plain. He added that plans for Fire Station 219 include road and drainage improvements.

City Engineer Beth Huning advised that the area in question is the Signal Butte and Elliot Road intersection which flooded several weeks ago. She reported that the City has been working on a

retention/detention facility east of Meridian to resolve the issues with the wash that runs through this area. Ms. Huning said that staff continues to work with FEMA on this issue.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the nearby Salt River Project (SRP) substation is not elevated; that although the fire station may be required to be elevated, the roadway would not be elevated; that the Federal grant also requires archaeological, historical and endangered species reports; that the original archaeological and Phase I environmental reports provided to FEMA were nine years old; and that 181 jobs related to these projects are being placed on hold as a result of the reporting requirements.

Chief Bloomer advised that grant funding for Station 220 has not been received pending the completion of an environmental study. He added that the Federal government has not requested an archaeological study because buildings were previously constructed on the site. Chief Bloom reported that the City's Engineering Department has been extremely cooperative in providing assistance with these issues.

Chairman Kavanaugh thanked staff for the update.

4. Hear a presentation and discuss the status of fire dispatch operations.

Fire Chief Harry Beck advised that in November of 2008, the Fire Department presented the Council with a proposal to redesign the dispatch operation through a number of actions that were interdependent and that would result in cost savings. He recalled that some time prior to the initial bond proposal, he and then Police Chief George Gascón discussed at length the need for a new Communications Center. Chief Beck said that the determination was made that the Police operation would move to a new center and that the Fire Department would remain in the existing facility. He recalled that he and Chief Gascón recognized that having both operations in one center was becoming counterproductive due to the increased specialization and service demand.

Assistant Chief Jim Bloomer advised that the City Manager's Office is currently conducting a study regarding the impact of having separate Fire and Police dispatch systems. He reported that Fire Department staff members are being interviewed as part of the process and it was his understanding that the report would be completed by the end of the month. Chief Bloomer said that a Deputy Fire Chief and three 24-hour shift Captains have been assigned to the Dispatch Center to assist the dispatchers and assess future staffing needs.

Committeemember Higgins stated that it was her understanding that when she supported the assignment of a Chief and Captains to the Dispatch Center, that these individuals would be assisting in triaging calls and analyzing the system.

Chief Beck said that her understanding of the intended assignment was accurate. He noted that a high priority is placed on police calls for service and the fact that the Police Department controls the Center limited the Fire Department's ability to implement changes.

Chairman Kavanaugh recalled that the Council voted unanimously to separate the Fire and Police Dispatch Centers. He expressed concern that a study is being conducted when the Council gave clear direction regarding this issue.

Chief Bloomer explained that the dispatchers report to the Police Department, and he added that although the Fire Department can make recommendations, the Police Department controls the Dispatch Center.

Chief Beck advised that initially there was great cooperation and things were moving forward. He said that at some point, a breakdown occurred in the interpretation of Council's direction. He added that staff continues to make an effort to work through these issues.

In response to a question from Committeemember Somers, Assistant to the City Manager Trisha Sorensen stated that a review of the April 2009 Council minutes indicated that although the issue was discussed, the Council did not make a motion or provide direction regarding the Dispatch Center. She stated that following an inspection of the Center by representatives from the City Manager's Office, Engineering, Fire and Police Departments, the Management, Performance and Accountability (MPA) Department was directed to conduct a study of the Dispatch Center to identify the impact of the proposed separation on the Police, Fire and Communications Departments with regard to staffing, operations, equipment, space needs, etc. as well as to identify the best approach to implementing the TRV Program.

Chairman Kavanaugh recalled that although no formal action was taken, the consensus of the Council was that staff would move forward to implement separate dispatch operations.

Committeemember Somers suggested that the Committee review the City Manager's study of the issue when it is completed, after which a March meeting could be scheduled to provide the Committee with the opportunity to make a recommendation to the full Council.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the Committee meeting tentatively scheduled for March 18<sup>th</sup> already has a number of issues on the agenda; and that the Committee would like to meet prior to the National League of Cities meeting.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Somers, Chief Beck advised that due to budgetary limitations the TRV units only operate when extra staff is available. He stated that at the present time several unfilled positions are in need of constant staffing, which has left a shortage of personnel available for the TRV Program.

Chief Beck said he would like to reframe the discussion regarding the Dispatch Center to being a reconfiguration of operations rather than a separation. He noted that the same software, the same CAD (Computer Aided Design) system, and the same personnel would be utilized by each department, and he stated that the Police and Fire Departments would continue to work together. Chief Beck added that a proposal to reconfigure the operation would enable Fire Department personnel to supervise and manage the Fire dispatch area of the operation. He explained that currently the Fire Department is unable to extract the type of data that would be of assistance in planning a flexible deployment system because of a lack of technicians.

In response to a question from Committeemember Somers, Chief Beck stated that he was unaware of a staffing budget allocation for the TRV Program.

Chief Beck responded to a question from Committeemember Higgins by stating that utilizing the Phoenix Fire Department's dispatch system would result in the East Valley Regional Dispatch Center being disbanded. He said that the other communities participating in the Center would

have to create their own system or contract with Phoenix for that service, if Phoenix was willing to provide the service. He noted that as a result of their budget situation, the City of Phoenix is currently in the process of eliminating a number of Public Safety positions.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that Mesa Fire Dispatchers also dispatch for Gilbert, Apache Junction and Queen Creek; that although a pod of dispatchers in the Communications Center is assigned to Fire Department dispatch, they report to the Police Department; and that a dispatcher in the pod can be reassigned to Police dispatch when a need arises.

Police Communications Lieutenant Lee Rankin came forward to address the Committee and said that Public Safety Dispatchers are trained as either police or fire dispatchers and are not interchangeable. He stated that 24 Fire Dispatchers are trained in that specialty and that the Fire protocols utilized to respond to calls were developed by the Fire Department. Lieutenant Rankin said the Police Department has always supported the reconfiguration for Fire dispatch operations and the Police Department would continue to cooperate in that effort.

Chief Beck stated that the protocols need to change. He said that currently the incident taker records both police and fire calls and that the Fire Department needs specialized incident takers in order to evaluate the caller's information and recommend the proper response.

City Manager Christopher Brady advised that a study is presently ongoing to determine the proper direction and the role of the TRVs, which would result in a recommendation regarding future action, the availability of resources, and the impact on dispatching. Mr. Brady stated that changes required to the dispatch operation in order to implement the TRV Program would be assessed and a recommendation would be forthcoming from the City Manager's Office.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Higgins, Chief Beck explained that the 24 Fire Dispatchers handle the radio traffic and the dispatch, but the actual incident taking is done by the 911 Operator. He stated that there is no opportunity to initiate training because the individuals have assigned duties for the Police Department.

It was moved by Committeemember Somers, seconded by Committeemember Higgins, that the Committee review the study being prepared by the City Manager's Office when it is completed and continue the discussion regarding dispatch operations in March.

Carried unanimously.

Chief Beck responded to a question from Committeemember Higgins by stating that although the Fire Captains are available to advise the individuals in the Dispatch Center when requested, they are seldom requested to do so.

Chairman Kavanaugh suggested that each member of the Committee tour the Phoenix and Mesa Dispatch Centers prior to the meeting in March. He thanked staff for the discussion, and he added that this would continue to be a priority issue for the Committee.

5. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Public Safety Committee meeting adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Public Safety Committee meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of February 2010. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

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LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

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Attachment (1)